

Recycling Compact Fluorescent Bulbs

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Some states **may require** households to recycle their mercury-containing light bulbs after they burn out. In addition, EPA strongly encourages the recycling of all CFLs and other fluorescent light bulbs because it reduces the chance that mercury ends up in the environment.

To recycle your used CFLs, drop them off at one of these [ALA-member lighting showrooms](#), or visit [Where You Live](#) or [Earth911.org](#) for additional options. For more information specific to your state, consult your [state environmental regulatory agency](#).

If your state or local environmental regulatory agency offers no other disposal options except your household garbage, place the fluorescent light bulb in a plastic bag and seal it before putting it in the trash. If your waste agency incinerates its garbage, you should search a wider geographic area for proper disposal options. Never send a fluorescent light bulb or any other mercury-containing product to an incinerator.

What to Do if a Fluorescent Light Bulb Breaks

Fluorescent light bulbs contain a very small amount of mercury sealed within the glass tubing. EPA recommends the following clean-up and disposal guidelines:

- 1. Open a window and leave the room for 15 minutes or more.**
- 2. Carefully scoop up the fragments and powder with stiff paper or cardboard and place them in a sealed plastic bag.**
 - Use disposable rubber gloves, if available (i.e., do not use bare hands). Wipe the area clean with damp paper towels or disposable wet wipes and place them in the plastic bag.
 - Do not use a vacuum or broom to clean up the broken bulb on hard surfaces.
- 3. Place all cleanup materials in a second sealed plastic bag.**
 - Place the first bag in a second sealed plastic bag and put it in the outdoor trash container or in another outdoor protected area for the next normal trash disposal. Note: Some states prohibit such trash disposal and require that broken and unbroken lamps be taken to a local recycling center.
 - Wash your hands after disposing of the bag.
- 4. If a fluorescent bulb breaks on a rug or carpet:**
 - First, remove all materials you can without using a vacuum cleaner, following the steps above. Sticky tape (such as duct tape) can be used to pick up small pieces and powder.
 - If vacuuming is needed after all visible materials are removed, vacuum the area where the bulb was broken, remove the vacuum bag (or empty and wipe the canister) and put the bag or vacuum debris in two sealed plastic bags in the outdoor trash or protected outdoor location for normal disposal.

[Learn more about compact fluorescent light bulb's from the ENERGY STAR program](#)

[Frequently Asked Questions about Compact Fluorescent Light Bulbs and Mercury \(PDF\)](#)